



Return to Play: Step One

Issued: 26 March 2021

Back to Bowls

The return of sport and physical activity is vital to the physical and mental health of the nation, and we know our sport has a big role to play in providing an opportunity for outdoor activity as the lockdown restrictions ease.

The government's roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions in England consists of four steps, and lawn bowls as an outdoor sport may resume from Monday 29th March (Step 1). From this date, the rules on social contact will change. People will not be required to stay at home, and will be permitted to meet outdoors in groups of up to six people, or as a group of two households, for exercise or recreation.

At Step 1, outdoor lawn bowls for adults and children is permitted in larger numbers, provided it is formally organised (see the section below on 'organised sport' for more information) and follows COVID-secure guidance. Where bowls activity is not formally organised, it can only take place within the rules on social contact – in groups of up to 6 people, or two households.

To provide additional support to enable affiliated clubs open safely, we are working in collaboration with the Bowls Development Alliance (BDA), British Crown Green Bowling Association and Disability Bowls England to develop resources for affiliated clubs under the banner 'Back to Bowls'. This will include:

- Exclusive access to club resources including signage, posters and sanitisation products
- Risk assessment template
- Case studies for 'covid-friendly' sessions and formats
- 'Stay safe' Membership pledge
- Review of online booking systems
- Additional information for disabled participation

If your club is not affiliated to Bowls England, please email us at clubs@bowlsengland.com and we can take you through the affiliation process, including connecting you with your County Association.

We recommend that all clubs consider this document together with the government guidance. All items may be adapted as necessary to meet your club's specific circumstances, so long as your actions remain consistent with government advice and social distancing requirements. This guidance is applicable from Monday 29th March and replaces all previous guidance that we have issued.

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Roadmap Timeline

The government will review four tests ahead of each Step. The dates outlined within this document are the earliest that we may move to each step and may be subject to change. You can read a summary of what will be included in each step [on the government's website](#).

- Step 1: Begins on Monday 29 March
- Step 2: begins no earlier than Monday 12 April (confirmation expected w/c Monday 5 April)
- Step 3: begins no earlier than Monday 17 May (confirmation expected w/c Monday 10 May)
- Step 4: begins no earlier than Monday 21 June (confirmation expected w/c Monday 14 June)

We're continuing to work with the government, via DCMS, and Sport England to answer your questions about the roadmap and what this means for our sport.

As we move through each new Step of the government's roadmap, we will update our guidance accordingly. Please note that this guidance is based on the information published by the government to date, and will be updated following any further updates. A maximum of one week's notice ahead of each change is expected.

Organised sport

For the sport of outdoor lawn bowls any activity organised under the jurisdiction of Bowls England by affiliated clubs, counties and associate members is recognised as organised sport in accordance with DCMS guidance. This includes:

- International and Performance events (including training)
- National Championships (including County Championship qualifying rounds)
- National Competitions
- District and county competitions involving affiliated clubs only
- District and county leagues involving affiliated clubs only
- Club fixtures between affiliated clubs
- Internal club events or organised sessions for club members
- Coaching by a qualified coach (see section on coaching for details)
- On green training provided by the Bowls Development Alliance

Any activity not listed above is not recognised as organised sport and will need to follow the guidance on outdoor legal gathering limits as this is considered to be informal or self-organised sport. This includes any casual play (for example 'roll-ups') and any activity involving clubs, leagues or associations not affiliated to Bowls England.

Whilst organised sport removes the restriction on legal gathering limits during participation, the relevant organising body (club, county, league or Bowls England) must consider the risks and set out ways to mitigate them so people can participate safely in accordance with this guidance. Informal or self-organised sport is not covered by any exemptions.

We will review our guidance for organised sport as the restrictions are eased to maximise participation whilst maintaining a safe environment for all participants.

If you wish your club or league's activity to be defined as organised sport and are not affiliated to Bowls England, please email us at clubs@bowlsengland.com and we can take you through the affiliation process, including connecting you with your County Association.

Step 1: Monday 29 March – Key points

From Monday 29 March until Step 2, the following applies to outdoor lawn bowls:

- Lawn bowls may resume
- Play is permitted in accordance with the guidelines in the Table below – this is for Step 1 only and will be reviewed as the restrictions are eased by government
- Clubs are advised to implement a pre-booking system in order to manage attendance at the club, and to ensure adequate time between booked sessions
- Travel to participate in bowls is permitted but you are advised to ‘stay local’ wherever possible
- Spectators are not permitted at Step 1 – only those who are participating or required to be on site to manage a session should be in attendance (exceptions apply for people with disabilities, or adults needed to supervise under-18s in a safeguarding role)
- Bowls coaching and other curriculum-based activity is permitted
- Greens maintenance is permitted

Format of Play

Organised sport	Informal activity
Singles – Use of every rink and marker permitted if required Pairs – Use of every rink Triples – Play on alternate rinks Fours – Play on alternate rinks	The ‘rule of six’ applies OR two households

Any combination of formats may be played under the ‘organised sport’ exemption, however the maximum number of participants on a six-rink outdoor green at any one time should not exceed 24. Clubs with less or additional rink capacity may amend figures accordingly (average four people per rink) so long as they deem it to be safe.

Equipment

Try to avoid using shared equipment whenever possible – players are advised to have their own mat/jack during any session. If you are sharing equipment, for example jacks/mats, practise strict hand hygiene including sanitisation after using any shared equipment. Should measuring be necessary, players (or marker if used) must use their own measure.

The following items can be utilised during any session:

- Mat
- Bowls
- Jack
- Rink markers
- Gloves
- Scorecards (these should be retained by one person only if required)
- Bowling arm/lifter (for use by one person only if required)
- Bowling aids (for players with a disability if required)

Bowls England – Return to Play Guidance for Affiliated Clubs, Counties and Associate Members
Step One – Issued 26 March 2021

The following items are deemed optional – it is for individual clubs to permit their use or otherwise:

- Scoreboards
- Bowls pushers
- Ditch markers
- 2m distance sticks
- Chalk (Spray chalk only)

Spectators

Spectators are not permitted. This does not apply to carers for people with disabilities, or adults needed to supervise under-18s in a safeguarding role. Where it is necessary for them to be present, supervising adults should not mix with others from outside their household or support bubble.

Travel

You should minimise time spent outside your home, but you can leave your home to participate in bowling activity. Always check that it's safe to travel before you set out. All participants must follow the [government's guidance on safer travel](#).

Changing rooms

Indoor facilities including changing rooms cannot open, although toilet facilities can be accessed. Indoor facilities can be used for through access (following Covid guidelines). Wherever possible, people should come ready to play.

Coaching

Bowls coaching is permitted where this is 1:1, 2:1 with someone from another household, or in your bubble or household. The coach is exempt from the legal gathering limits for work purposes. This should only take place in a public outdoor place i.e. the bowls club. Social distancing should be maintained between people who do not live together or share a support/childcare bubble. Coaching education and training courses can be delivered through the education exemption.

Hygiene

Hand sanitise at regular intervals, especially if you have to touch communal surfaces or equipment. Once you are home, remember to wash your hands thoroughly.

Frequently asked questions

Does guidance on face coverings apply for bowls?

You're not required to wear face coverings while taking part in the sport of outdoor bowls. Sport England advises that all forms of face coverings may restrict breathing efficiency and should not be used during exercise unless your doctor advises it.

Do I need to be vaccinated to participate in outdoor bowls?

There is currently no requirement from government for participants to have been vaccinated and clubs are advised not to restrict access to our sport to anyone who has not yet received the vaccine.

Can we open the changing rooms and toilets?

Indoor facilities including changing rooms cannot open, although toilet facilities can be accessed. Indoor facilities can be used for through access (following Covid guidelines). Wherever possible, people should come ready to play. Changing facilities can only be used in emergency situations, or by disabled people who are taking part in organised sport and physical activity. If facilities remain closed, exceptions must be made for essential activity such as the provision of first aid or access to essential equipment for training and matches.

Are spectators allowed?

Spectators are not permitted until a later step in the roadmap. Bowls is permitted because of the benefits of sport and physical activity for people's physical and mental wellbeing. This permission to allow sport and physical activity to return is just for the activity itself. This doesn't apply to carers for disabled people, or adults needed to supervise under-18s in a safeguarding role. Where it's necessary for them to be present, supervising adults should not mix with others from outside their household or support bubble.

Are club meetings permitted under the 'rule of six'?

The 'rule of six' enables up to six people to meet outdoors from Monday 29 March. We recommend that any larger meetings are conducted virtually until further notice. Sport specific guidance on organising virtual meetings, including Committee Meetings and AGMs, is available from [Sport England Club Matters](#).

Is greens maintenance work permitted?

Yes – greens maintenance work is permitted as it is 'work that can not be carried out at home'. The most comprehensive advice for greens maintenance is available via the [Grounds Management Association](#), of which Bowls England is a member.

Can I travel to take part in the sport of bowls?

You should minimise time spent outside your home, but you can leave your home to participate in bowling activity. Always check that it's safe to travel before you set out. All participants must follow the [government's guidance on safer travel](#). Participants should note that this guidance will be updated as we move through the different steps of the government's roadmap. All participants should therefore regularly review this guidance to make sure they are following up to date information.

Is coaching permitted?

Bowls coaching is permitted where this is 1:1, 2:1 with someone from another household, or in your bubble or household. The coach is exempt from the legal gathering limits for work purposes. This should only take place in a public outdoor place i.e. the bowls club. Social distancing should be maintained between people who do not live together or share a support/childcare bubble. Coaching education and training courses can be delivered through the education exemption.

What should we do to keep facilities and equipment clean?

Cleaning protocols should be put in place to limit coronavirus transmission in public places. Touch points (e.g. handrails and gates) should be particular areas of focus for increased cleaning.

What advice do you have to maintain hygiene?

To help everyone maintain good hygiene, consideration should be given to the following:

- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into your arm. Consider how to ensure safety messages reach those with hearing or vision impairments
- Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards
- Providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved
- Enhancing cleaning for busy areas
- Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection
- Using disposable paper towels in handwashing facilities where possible
- Minimising use of portable toilets
- Provision of automated hand sanitising dispensers in public places

Will there be different local restrictions?

At this stage, in England we understand that the relaxation of restrictions will occur at a national level at the same time. Clubs/counties must adhere to any local restrictions should any be imposed in the future.

What activities can disabled people take part in?

Organised outdoor bowls can take place where it follows the government's guidance on recreational team sport and grassroots sport and leisure activity.

Where disabled people need support from a carer or personal assistant during activity, will this be allowed, e.g. a visually impaired bowler?

Yes. People who provide essential support (e.g. carers) to disabled people are exempt, and don't count towards gathering limits. Therefore, disabled participants can be supported by a carer(s)/personal assistant(s) while taking part in the sport of bowls.

Do I need to maintain social distancing if I'm working with a disabled person who needs support?

Social distancing should be maintained where possible, but in some circumstances people will need physical assistance to be active. It's important you discuss this with the person to consider their needs and preferences. Any sports coaches or trainers undertaking one-to-one sessions should ensure they're complying with relevant national governing body safeguarding policies and procedures and conduct a thorough risk assessment before engaging in any sessions. This should include particular consideration for under-18s and vulnerable adults.

What are the test and trace regulations?

Clubs should [display an NHS QR code that participants](#) can scan using a mobile device. This is to help trace and stop the spread of coronavirus. Alternatively, ensure you maintain a separate log including contact details so that contact tracers can get in touch with people if required. To support NHS Test and Trace, you must hold records for 21 days. This reflects the incubation period for coronavirus, which can be up to 14 days, and an additional seven days to allow time for testing and tracing. Notify the venue operator if possible.

Elite sport

Elite athletes and support staff can use indoor and outdoor sport facilities for training and competition. Elite sport events can continue to take place in sport facilities, where permitted in line with the guidance on elite sport.

The future

Step 2 (Monday 12 April at the earliest)

- Outdoor catering/hospitality will be permitted
- Changing rooms can open
- Travel restrictions eased

Step 3 (Monday 17 May at the earliest)

- Larger groups able to gather at clubs
- Inside catering permitted with restrictions
- Overnight stays allowed

Step 4 (Monday 21 June at the earliest)

- All restrictions are expected to be lifted

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS OUR CURRENT EXPECTATION BASED UPON THE GOVERNMENT ROADMAP BUT NOT OFFICIAL GUIDANCE.

Useful Links

DCMS – Guidance for the public and sport providers on how to participate in grassroots sport and physical activity during COVID restrictions

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-grassroots-sports-guidance-for-the-public-and-sport-providers#organised-sport>

Sport England – Return to Play Guidance and Club Resources

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus/return-play>

Activity Alliance – Specialist support for disabled people

<http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/covid19>